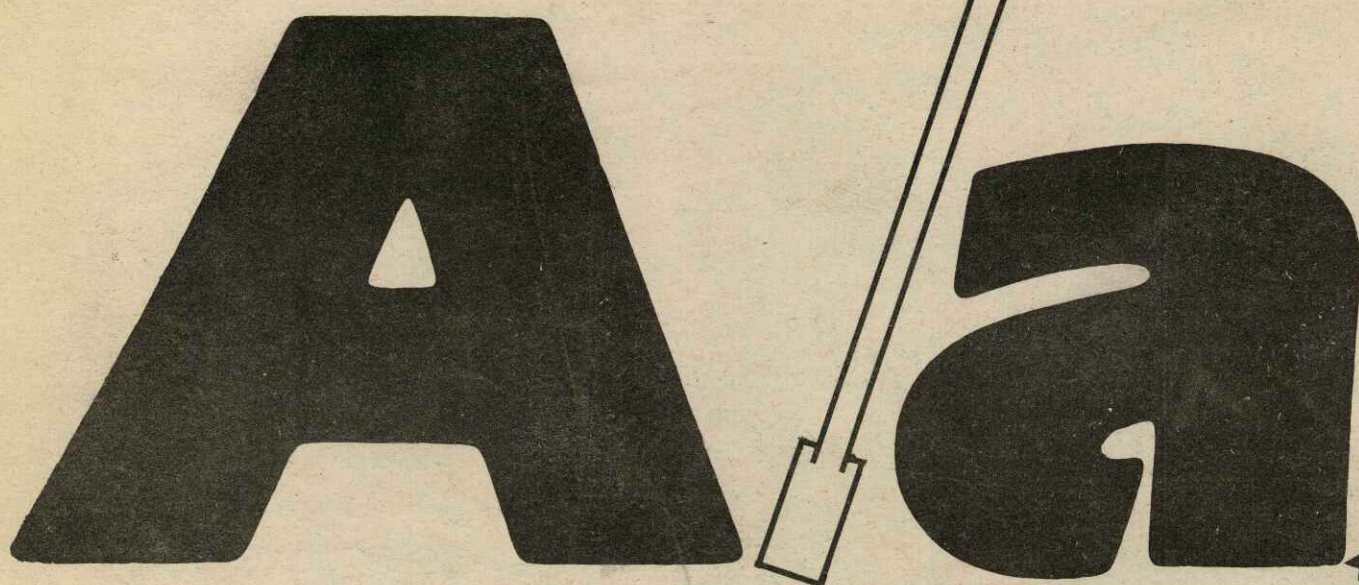
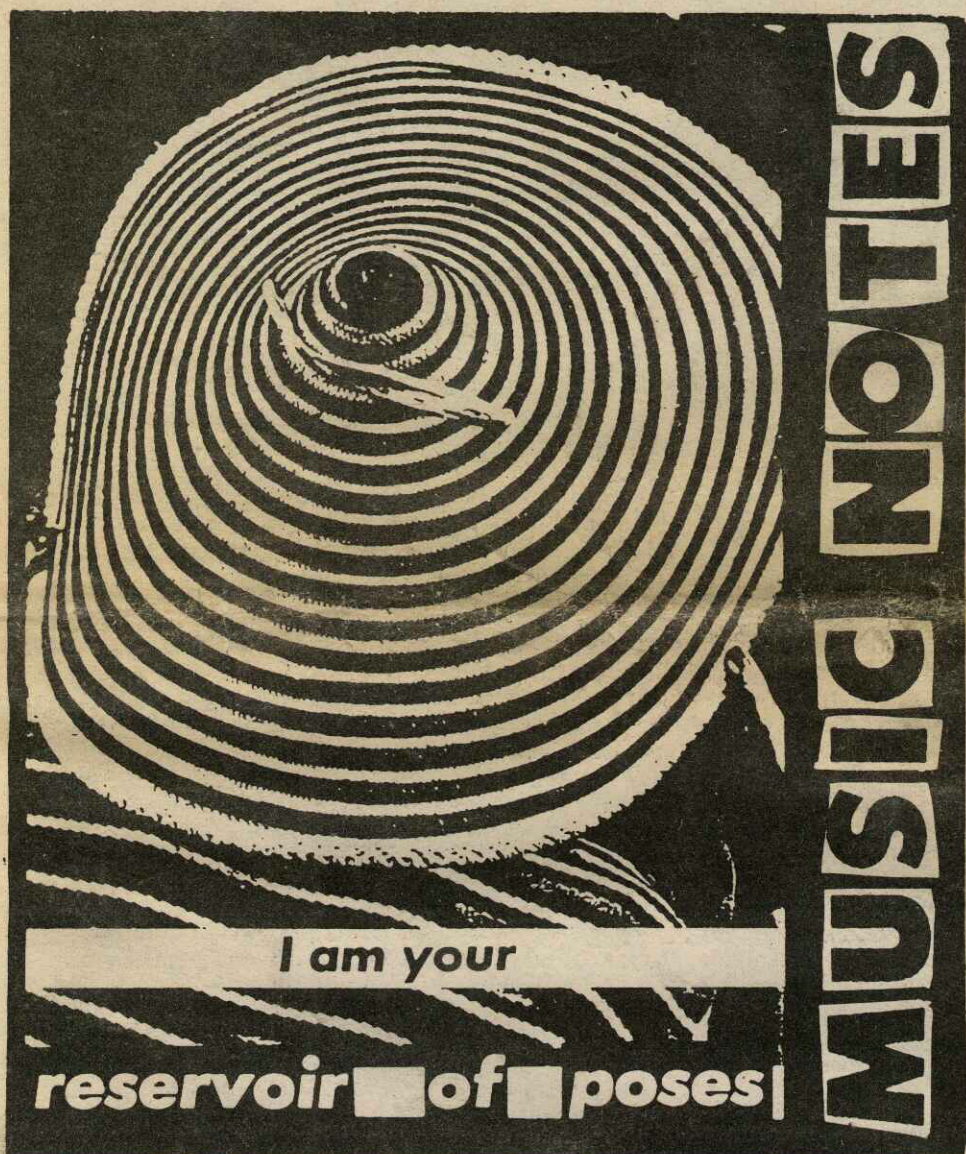


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SPECIAL ISSUE:
"THE STATE OF THINGS..."

"RESERVOIR OF POSES"



Music Notes and Hopeless Tasks

by Gregor Jamroski

Section One

I
Founded on the essential deceptiveness of pop music's function within advanced capital, today's pop revolt can only lie to itself as to its radicality. The terms oppositional pop, rebel music, and radical bands are invented ones. The alternative music press, those widely scattered fanzines produced by misinformed malcontents and aspiring journalists, like to label the bands as the center of gravity for a movement of negativity against Power and authority. Stripped of the ideological baggage found in a song lyric, an interview, or in the slogans inscribed on record and cassette covers, our music rebels proliferate at every step of their activity the alienating forms of the society they claim to rebel against.

II

At its outset, the pop music rebellion that only apparently began with The Sex Pistols, was a rebellion aimed at the music industry. The pop music industry, like any other, attributes to commodities a mystical ability for the satisfaction of needs and desires. Coinciding with post-War reconstruction and the increasingly affluent base attached to that, pop culture became the ideological discourse for the array of commodities available to youth: fast cars (the auto as the *sign*, in the semiotic sense, of prosperity), being just the most superficial and glaring example. During the 1960's, pop culture was the reification of the dissent against the Vietnam War, the sexual 'revolution,' experimentation with psychoactive drugs, and the dismissal of material life —among other things. During the early '70's, from Bowie to Yes and back to Roxy Music, the fantasy escapism of glam-rock and 'progressive' music increasingly separated pop culture, in its ideology, from its social base —youth. Top Forty and *Top of the Pops* music merely became a larger joke with its endless promotion of the most easily seen-through aspects of the dominant culture. Punk emerged as a rebellion to regain control of the culture youth no longer ideologically possessed: creating a crisis that merely assured the updating of the pop spectacle. While punk protagonists heralded the movement as the artistic, cultural, and political avant-garde, it was no more than a recuperative representation of a consciousness already at work.

III

Including every political ideology available on the market, and marketing every

political ideology, the latest phase of pop rebellion has nonetheless been a representation of the most critical forces yet arrayed against advanced capital: forces that first emerged collectively in France during May of 1968. The punk rebellion offered, as it still does, political criticism on an variety of subjects, among them: sexual roles, dead routines, authoritarian structures, work, racism, capitalism, rioting, and the reduction of life to mere survival. Despite the radicality found in such critiques, punk rapidly underwent a reversal of any potential subversive force it had: a characteristic of the whole of advanced capital and its ability to recuperate its opposition. While punk entailed, as do its current offshoots, a partial critique of domination, it failed to critique — as youth continues to be fooled by — the dominant value system's use of pop culture and the domination inherent in the form of pop. It is perhaps this failure which has led to the mutations in punk —hardcore, post-punk, oi, minimalism, industrial, etcetera; all of which claim to retain the criticality of early punk — and to the proliferation of even more obvious forms of domination: fanzines; organizations "by punks and for punks" who mainly organize shows, put out occasional records, etc., and who deal with the cash end of the operation which "keeps it in the movement." From here it is with a more detailed analysis of the form of domination in pop culture that, perhaps, a more effective subversion of pop culture can be put to use.



Section Two

The alienation of the spectator to the profit of the contemplated object (which is the result of his own unconscious activity) is expressed in the following way: the more he contemplates the less he lives; the more he accepts recognizing himself in the dominant images of need, the less he understands his own needs and desires.

—Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*

IV

The radical band, rather than being a component of a rebellious pop culture, is both a process and a product within the pop industry: it is a commodity that creates itself, contrary to its real desire to be solely communication. From the recruitment of members and the formation of the band, to the rehearsal, the stage, and possibly to the record or cassette, this process is a production that develops itself as an entertainment commodity. Regardless of the fact that the band attaches a subversive content to the commodity, its methodological flow is that of all commodities and remains constrained within the metaphysical subtleties which all commodities contain. The radical band's essential weakness is not so much that it attempts to attach a subversive content to the commodity which it is, but that it fails to subvert the commodity's domination.

V

Respective to the highly-paid "straight" wage-slaves-cum-commodities of the entertainment industry, the only real compensation the radical has for his activity is that of being able to feel in the participation of rebellion. It is not important whether or not the band behaves literally as a commodity (that is, whether or not they, or a club owner, require that their audience pay to see them, or that they have records or cassettes available), but that the form which they utilize for their participation is the form of the commodity. It is precisely in the commodity form where the absence of participation can be located. The commodified radical band is the pseudo-fulfillment of both the need and the desire for revolt: it is the representation of rebellion, a non-living image which reflects —but does not act upon— the basis of revolt. By its continual pseudo-satisfaction of those needs and desires, it sublimates the possibilities for real activities which could fundamentally change lives. The radical band does not participate in rebellion but reduces it to a frozen frame of passively absorbed images.

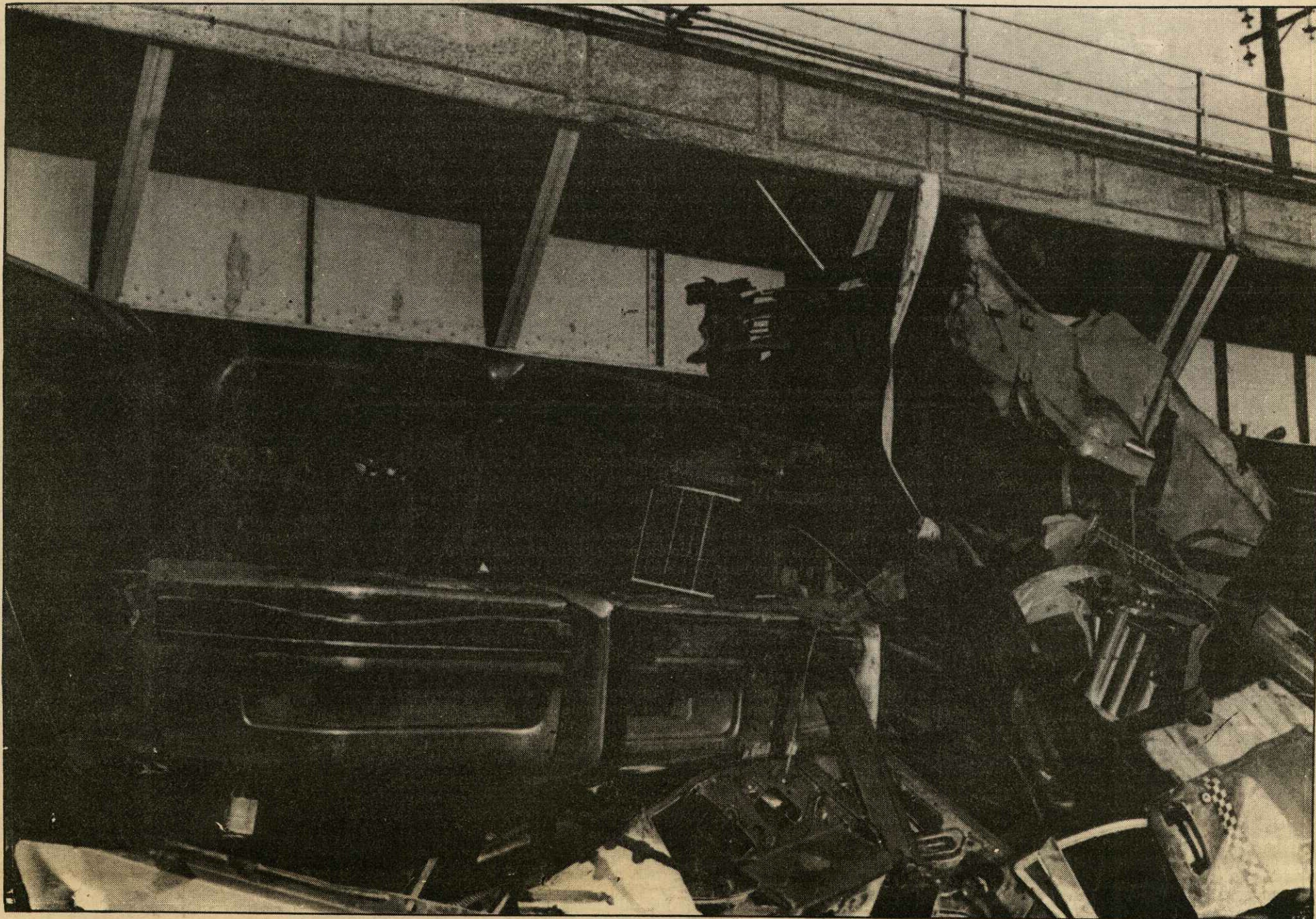
To the purpose of profit, the commodity is both the result and the goal of the existing means of production: it aims at nothing other than the reproduction of itself. The reign of the commodity as a pseudo-satisfaction of needs and desires entails the separation of individuals. This separation ensures not only the return of the consumer (due to the pseudo-satisfaction) but that the commodity becomes the focus of those needs and desires. The entertainment spectacle of pop rebellion provides the spectator with a false gratification of desires: no one is challenged to rely upon themselves and their own inner creativity and 'worth;' and there is no need for real activity.

(Author's Note: This text is what was only the beginning of a much longer —and much more detailed— analysis, but I got tired of writing in solitude. Perhaps the printing of these first sections will make my activity more collective, rather than isolated and separate.)

—Gregor Jamroski

(writing in *Hopeless Tasks* PO Box 22072 Seattle WA 98122)

"UNINFORMATION"



These Things We Control

by Carl Howard

It was a bumper sticker, one word underneath the international symbol for DO NOT: The one word was "SUBLUXATION." Neither I nor anyone I know had ever heard of this word, an obvious farication, yet it was considered important enough for someone to print and plaster an opinion of it in public. I've come to imagine that the "word" refers to a suburban parallel of urban gentrification; but this is unimportant. The point is that the word was so new and slick that it said nothing to me. The effectiveness of the message was completely compromised because it was incomprehensible. The sticker UNINFORMED me.

Here we have the concept of UNINFORMATION. We may differentiate this from the already-established idea of DISINFORMATION. In this second idea, such an overwhelming amount of similar data is introduced into the societal mind at every moment that it is impossible to process it all. This works both to the advantage and the disadvantage of information-processing bodies (governments, media) who regulate the dissemination of data in the environment. However, precisely which information sinks in and which slips by differs with the individual—thus the much-touted "psychology of the masses" is a fallacy, as opinion is shaded by each human.

The idea of UNINFORMATION may be introduced as a modern-day extension of Disinformation, and is profoundly central (so sez me) to the way Americans communicate today.

We are a generation of information processors; our own evolution parallels that of the computers we create—in this way we can say that our machines are based upon biologic models. The more specialized the work which our machines do (word PROCESSING), the more specialized the data which are minds are able to and must process (and vice versa: there's nothing conspiratorial about this).

The immediate result of this specialization of processing is the quick creation of new and sometimes esoteric forms of technical rhetoric. The word Subluxation, which means nothing to the uninitiated, may be one man's bread and butter. The advantage over the uninitiated is clearly a factor of control. Uninformation does not exist merely to alienate (as Disinformation obviously does) but to impart insight into a specialty FOR THOSE WHO WANT IT.

This publication focuses upon forms of alternative communication. A popular charge against "underground" artists by outsiders is that alternative styles of audiovisual "entertainment" are generated only because "young people are bored with the commercialized, pasteurized sound of run-of-the-mill rock. They want to hear something new" (*Wall Street Journal*, October 3 1985). More concisely: all we want is to be placated with an alternative Top Forty. But we know, or should, that this appraisal has nothing to do with the truth. This publication, and others like *UNSOUND* and *Zamizdat Trade Journal*, exists to probe cultural data, not simply to locate a better happy pill.

We are not here simply to profit from the sudden (and extremely suspect) marketability of "Space Music"—the works of Eno, Wollenweider, and other latter-day students of John Cage—but rather to interpolate the results of our cultural and biological investigations into forms more contemporary and appropriate than the time-lagged "mainstream" CARES to offer. We are therefore literally involved with the evolution of the species beyond its present, self-made apparatuses of confinement.

The history of the so-called "avant garde" in the twentieth century is NOT that of artists who test the waters simply to protect the rest of us from the dangers of the future—who sterilize it for us—and neither has there been an "advance guard" in ANY SENSE. The reassertion of interest today in the Surrealist activities of the 1930's confirms that the avant-garde worked not for the future, but for their present day; it has simply taken the rest of us fifty years to determine that Surrealist waters were safe to swim in after all. And

still the lie of an avant-garde persists, as with "undergrounds," thrown around mindlessly by *The New York Times* in every week's culture section. In fact this country possesses no organized art movements of any kind.

Political and economic priorities have regularly squelched creative organizations since this country's inception. However because of this economic structuring we now have a tool by which artistic organization can be not only possible but impermeable to exploitation from the outside. This tool is UNINFORMATION.

Some rhetoric has already been established within the genre of American "independent" music—new terms have been created to direct our mouths forever away from the rightfully-stigmatized names "industrial music" and (God help us) "junk rock"—these terms shall continue to exist in the minds of outsiders, thus limiting the scope of both their perception and their exploitative intervention into the actual work being done. For example, we have the abbreviation "K-7," meaning cassette, which in its vagueness is clearly an uninformer to the outsider. How can the meaning be ascertained beyond its standard contexts (mail-order catalogues, review columns)?

But while the phrase K-7 does its work as a signifier for some and as a barrier to understanding for others, its steadfast glibness remains typical of the "mainstream" fanzine mentality in that it does nothing to evolve our knowledge of what the cassette really is. It may well be, to give another example, that more is understood about the cassette-using Fostex X-15 multi-tracker in the independent recording community than anywhere else, but this knowledge may not translate into a simple abbreviation and is therefore not discussed. The term K-7 tells us nothing about the versatility of the medium; and for that matter the word "tape" involves only one stroke more of the typewriter than does "K-7."

The point here is that we can evolve our own perceptions of the medium without adding significantly to the number of reference points decipherable to the outside. I know for instance that A/a magazine will have little enjoyment value to a seasoned rock "fan" because its topics of discussion as well as its style bear little resemblance to the "commodity supermarket" approach of their favorite fanzine or video program.

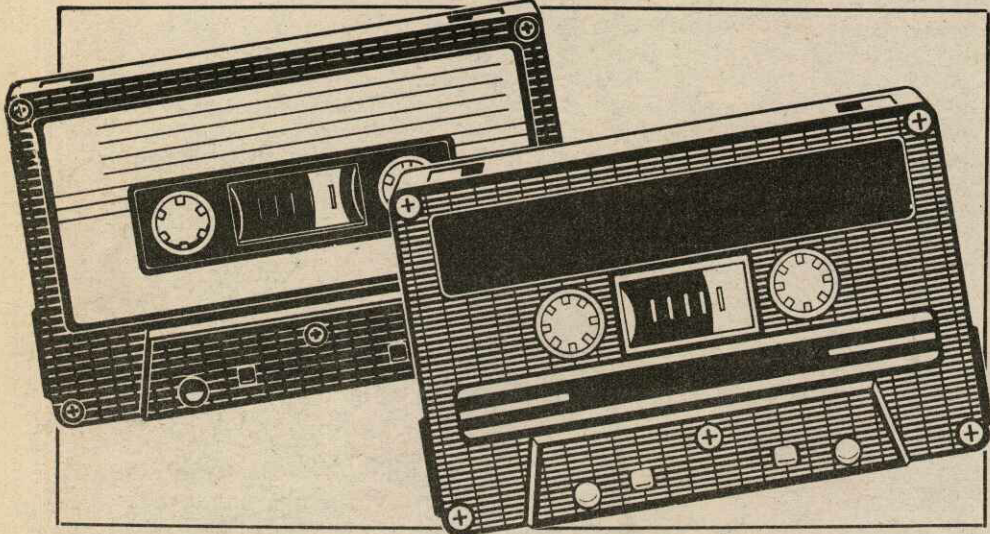
A/a, which has shunned any copyright in its own version of a "freedom of information act," has rated products and performances neither for entertainment "value" nor for any supposed "artistic" abilities, in opposition to the norm; and yet its depictions have rendered both portraits of music and the approaches of its composers. This can be considered truly "independent" in that it bears no connection to mainstream methods. However it has neither restricted information nor crouched behind confusing abbreviations. For all that, A/a still offers few to reference points to the outsider WHO REFUSES TO STUDY IT CLOSELY. It offers understanding for whoever desires it, yet few will desire it. Therefore we may affirm that Uninformation can present itself in plain english and still be effective.

I now point to certain American magazines which I believe present information in a manner similar to that outlined above, and to their benefit. These publications are *UNSOUND* (801-22 Street San Francisco CA 94107); *The Other Sound* (Po Box 1060 Allston MA 02134); *OBJEKT* (PO Box 962 Eureka! CA 95502); *Alternative Rhythms* (8951 SW 53 Street Cooper City FL 33328); *Patio Table* (PO Box 2026 Madison Square Station NY 10159); *Creative Virtue* (PO Box 45592 Seattle WA 98145); *ND* (PO Box 4144 Austin TX 78769); *No Commercial Potential* (PO Box 300101 Minneapolis MN 55404); *Hopeless Tasks* (PO Box 22072 Seattle WA 98122); *Factsheet Five* (41 Lawrence Street Medford MA 02155); and *Zamizdat Trade Journal* (550 College Avenue Boulder CO 80302).

Other publications of similar orientation may have escaped the attention of this listing; for this, apologies are in order.

—CH

"THE CASSETTE"



How the Music Industry is Killing Music

by Pennie Stasik

There is some serious talk these days in Washington concerning a distinctively little music versus Big Music issue: the Home Audio Recording Act currently before Congress. What is proposed is a royalty added onto cassette tapes and recording equipment to the tune of one-cent per minute on blank tapes, twenty-five per cent of wholesale on dual cassette machines, and five to ten per cent of wholesale on single decks. The royalty being proposed, it is argued, will recover sales revenue "lost" by the Music Industry due to consumers taping records which they would have otherwise purchased.

The Coalition to Save America's Music! (SAM) sings "Don't let the music die" on every page of their newsletter, as well as on their two-inch buttons. They argue that the proposed House and Senate bills, S 1739 and HR 2911, "bring us one step closer to compensating artists and musicians for the losses suffered due to home taping." They say that "the impact of these lost sales is felt by new artists who go unrecorded and new music which goes unpublished." They say that they care about "the future of music," and that if people continue to tape without the compensation due the record companies, soon there will be "no more music left to tape." The sample letter to Congress included in SAM's information packet asks, "If they [musicians] don't get paid, how can they afford to be musicians?"

Whether by deliberate intent or ignorance, the opinion that "Home Taping is Killing Music" is a direct insult to anyone who does not agree with the notion that the entire world of music is embodied in major corporate labels' products. The implication that "music" will die is an affront to the very spirit of the independent musician (and let us not forget the countless others who make music simply for their own enjoyment). If anything, music thrives because of homes and the tapes which they contain—and not the "copied" kind, but the kind recorded for the purpose of self-expression.

The statement by Stanley Gortikov, President of the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), that the tape industry "is a predatory, parasitic industry. It's nothing of itself" (*Rolling Stone*, September 16 1982) should make most independent musicians bristle and flinch at such a short-sighted view. The fact is that from the most blinding-glitter superstar to the dark-closet synthesist, everyone starts making music by noodling, and the cassette is the perfect noodling agent—and still in its tiny infancy.

It might come as a surprise, considering SAM's near-fantastic slogans, that business has never been boomier for Big Music. Take a look at these figures: In 1984, the Record Industry reported shipments of recorded product at the \$4.37 billion mark; an industry high topping the 1978 record of \$4.13 billion, and a fifteen per cent increase over 1983.

But the most significant news, in light of the arguments, is the rapidly escalating figure on pre-recorded cassette shipments: 332 million units valued at \$2.38 billion, steadily and exponentially rising since 1980, when unit sales were (only) 99 million. These figures plainly demonstrate the willingness of consumers to purchase their pre-recorded music in the format of their choice when given the option; it is precisely here that the argument that this is not so falls apart. As the sale of tapes, both pre-recorded and blank, continues to rise each year, the cassette is establishing itself as a distinctly crucial aspect of our media-based culture—all while the Record Industry is enjoying an unprecedented resurgence of consumer support.

Historically, the proposed Home Taping legislation dates back to 1981, just after the Record Industry had slid into a royal slump in 1980—its worst year since it first rose mightily in the 1960's. Casting a suspicious green eye upon the growing cassette industry, both Warner and CBS Records launched consumer surveys and concluded that they had a war on their hands. The enemy publicly identified was, of course, the cassette tape and recorder manufacturer, and the consumer. Yet there lurked a more insidious enemy, an enemy more slowly and quietly identified—the Record Industry itself.

Remember eight-track tapes? These were introduced by the Industry soon after the invention of cassette technology in 1964. This adapted version of a technology used by radio ("carts") appealed strongly to the established Music Industry, while cassettes were left to themselves to eventually catch on as the obviously superior format, and as the technology of choice for mobile, music-desiring consumers. For a while, home taping was frequently the only way to have pre-recorded music on cassette. Later, pre-recorded cassettes produced by the Majors were of such poor quality and so badly marketed that home taping remained the only practical solution for many. A habit developed among some consumers, encouraged by a big, sluggish Music Industry slow to respond to consumer tastes. But the idea that significant numbers of American consumers (as in most people who buy blank cassettes)—whose middle name is "Convenience"—would prefer to spend their time and energy taping at home from vinyl is almost ludicrous.

Additionally, it is not at all clear that there is any direct link between blank tape sales and record sales. This connection becomes even more tenuous in the future, as the uses of cassettes continue to vary and expand. In other words, the sale of blank cassettes will logically escalate as more uses for them are realized by multitudes of consumers, while their (undeniable) use of record vinyl grows more and more insignificant as a proportion of total volume sold. As Mykel Board points out, if record companies can make money off of the sales of the cassette industry, the tendency will be to sit back, reap the profits, entrench, and be "parasitic." And certainly there will not be a drive to "sign more new music acts," as argued by SAM, for adventurousness is not a trait of the leisurely Big who do not have to work to receive compensation.

What we have here is a case of Big tagging along at the heels of small which, I would like to point out, is not at all unusual. At the level of Big, environmental challenges, such as the stress of new technologies, are commonly met with sheer entrenchment on the marketing front, while the real energy is reserved for creative legislation and lobbying. Yet though the Record Industry did not leap, it has hopped a bit—and its recovery has been both remarkable and monstrous.

In this day of (presumably) supply-side economics, I think it's funny that the Music Industry begs the government to crawl all over its back, whereas emphasis upon supply—an enticing, well-packaged product, for instance—is a secondary cause for action, at best. The current proposed legislation calls for government fiddling at every step of the

way, from the issuance of licenses to cassette tape and recorder manufacturers, to the disbursement of royalties. The legislation does indicate that those claiming copyright payments are to "negotiate in good faith" for such claims—which may necessitate designation of a common agent. ASCAP is one such "common agent." Since the procedures established for royalties distribution through such existing agencies are currently seen as fair by the courts (though such royalties rarely filter down to indies [see *Pollution Control* issues 5 and 6]), the likelihood is that new sources of royalties would be handled similarly. This is virtually insured since major record companies represent the largest single bloc of copyright owners who would be "negotiating in good faith."

Adding to the bias against independent music and consumers at large in the proposed legislation is the non-specific provision in the bills those not taping pre-recorded music. A clause exempts such users from paying the royalty. Most likely this would be in the form of a rebate, according to Ruth Rogers of the Audio Recording Rights Coalition (ARRC); but it's not at all clear how or when this system would be put into effect. What is clear is that any payment exemption system open enough to include all independent musicians and other "fair-use" consumers would be a system that could be used by anyone at all, and therefore no such open system will be put in place [Additionally, it seems clear that such a system would entail government meddling into the affairs of independent musicians, with such restrictions as "Washington Wives" censorship becoming an issue—Ed.].

Instead, the system would be most useful to those clearly defined as "professionals"—as in those in the Major Music Industry. In discussing the problem with Margie Berman of SAM, she could only indicate that she was "not sure" how those not using cassettes to tape records could be practically exempted from paying the royalty.

There is another sneaking, crawling aspect to the arguments used by SAM and the Record Industry, one which has already been implied. This involves the desire to exercise control over the methods by which consumers consume music. There is an underlying implication in the proposed legislation which intends to characterize Home Taping as illegal and/or immoral. The fact is that home audio taping was declared legal in a 1971 Congressional ruling amending the copyright law. In 1984 the US Supreme Court ruled that home video taping is not a copyright infringement. For the Record Industry to demand retribution from the cassette industry is as reasonable as fast food chains demanding a percentage on the sales of microwave ovens because people making fast foods at home are "stealing" their profits.

Cassettes are of a medium which allows for the entire range of a creative personal process, from inception to conclusion. There is no need for the Music Industry here. Let the Industry keep what it owns, but let the heart and soul of music remain unshackled.

Following is a contact list for key groups and individuals important to the outcome of the Home Audio Recording Act. You can contact any or all of them to present your views or for more information. [You may wish to photocopy this article and send it to them, that is, if home photocopying isn't killing writing—Ed.]. Advises SAM, "Letters are effective. They are read and they are counted. The best letters are brief, informative, personal, and cordial. Your letters should include: (1) A statement of the issue [including the name of the bill] and an explanation of your personal concern and involvement; (2) A request for support [of your view] but NO DEMANDS; (3) A request for response updates as the legislation develops, and (4) A reference to any contact you have had with the official in the past" (Thanks for this advice, SAM).

□□□□

Audio Recording Rights Coalition (ARRC)— (Ruth Rogers) PO Box 33705, 1145 19 Street NW Washington DC 20033/1-800-282-TAPE. Group backed by manufacturers of cassette tapes and recorders, audio retailers, and the American Council on the Blind. They will help you set up a meeting in your community with your Representative.

Coalition to Save America's Music (SAM)— (Margie Berman) 1200 New Hampshire Avenue NW Washington DC 20036/1-202-872-3665. Music Industry-backed group supporting royalty charges on cassette tapes and recorders. Good source for detailed information on which Senators and Representatives to contact and how, including DC phone numbers for each.

US House of Representatives— The Honorable _____, US House of Representatives Washington DC 20515. Representatives on the Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties, and the Administration of Justice, which is handling the House version of the Home Audio Recording Act, HR 2911, are: Jack Brooks (TX), Robert Kastenmeier (WI), Romano Mazzoli (KY), Mike Synar (OK), Patricia Schroeder (CO), Barney Frank (MA), Bruce Morrison (CT), Howard Berman (CA), Fredrick Boucher (VA), Carlos Moorhead (CA), Thomas Kindness (OH), Michael DeWine (OH), Patrick Swindall (GA), Howard Coble (NC), and Henry Hyde (IL).

US Senate— The Honorable _____, US Senate Washington DC 20510. Senators on the Subcommittee on Patents, Copyrights, and Trademarks, which is handling the Senate version of the Home Audio Recording Act, S 1739, are: *Paul Laxalt (NV), *Alan Simpson (WY), *Howard Metzenbaum (OH), *Dennis DeConcini (AZ), Orrin Hatch (UT), Patrick Leahy (VT), and Charles Mathias (MD). S 1739 is under current consideration (* = undecided).

—Pennie Stasik

(For *Pollution Control* 1725 East 115 Street Cleveland OH 44106)

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"THE VIRTUE MANIFESTO"

Excerpts of a continuing aesthetic doctrine

by RS Pearson

Art, when it begins to gain consciousness, is the tool for social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual enhancement. This positive announcement is fruitful in enabling one to see facts more clearly, in communicating new vision, and in helping one to feel better about oneself. Artists are not always up to making such beneficial statements. They are either too concerned with entertainment—entertaining their patrons in order to stay financially stable—or the opposite, too antisocial to benefit anyone, even on a purely aesthetic level.

The present age is one of multifaceted pluralism, especially in the realm of art. Yet for the majority of artists there is a habitual repetition. The progress of the two decades between 1910 and 1930 has seemingly laid the groundwork for much of the aesthetic statement of artists active since then. It is apparent that there is a lack of force apparent in the arts today; things seem to be on the same steady slope created by the immense developments of the handful of Dadaists and Surrealists active at the time.

The best definition for art might be: anything that gives the aesthetic experience. Therefore I see no problems for anyone; I have no martyr complex for the whole of art. I think that seventy-five percent of all art ever created is slop. Such art fails to give me the aesthetic experience, and definitely does not stimulate my intellect. In almost every case I can see why some might be affected by it; but for me it fails to be *convulsive*, and the convulsion of aesthetics is very desirable.

It can be said that no progress has been made in the world of aesthetic theory, pertaining to the actual enhancement of humanity, since Surrealism. Andre Breton [leader of the French movement] once said that his principle concern was morality. This statement was perhaps related in essence to similar proclamations in Rimbaud's poetry; the motto of these men was to change life. Yet one wonders in what way they would change it, which things would remain in their behavior after the change had occurred.

The end result of artists trying to change life has been very bleak. Few seem able to escape the maze of despair, decadence, and drug addiction. One finds here people who have begun work with the best of intentions only to be defeated by the world they intended to save. Such was the case with Antonin Artaud, who was incapacitated [by the French government] for his struggle.

Pragmatism is the only obvious path to go on here. If such a philosophy as Freidrich Nietzsche's only produces people in despair at its end, every sane man will turn to Bergson instead. The end product is what people with common sense are after, and *should* be an artist who is above acts of slander, immorality, and corruption of ethics, which is so common to the educated of the twentieth century. Some see these qualities becoming inevitable when one struggles not to be a member of the mass, but these qualities have nothing to do with creative expression and only mirror the kind of art which these people are capable of producing. However this decadence is disputable, even as to whether or not it actually exists.

Surrealism said that we could not find beauty in this world except for the beauty of romantic love, and that of nature. The Virtue aesthetic states that we do not have to invent all the beauty we seek; there is beauty to be found amid this world. And obviously there is beauty in the surreal also. We do not have to manufacture our aesthetic statement by random chance or quick inspiration; we have to explore our memories of our fondest experiences and structure our art upon those experiences which mean most to us—the ones which affect us in the strongest way.

These memories will influence our surrealism in the mode of hope. The Kierkegaardian concept of possibility is a foundation of the Virtue aesthetic. We must prepare ourselves to both create and observe this art. The filters which prevent us from absorbing what is beautiful and from having an aesthetic experience are mental blocks, caused by environment, choice, or unconscious habit. The artist therefore must become a kind of ascetic/philosopher; particularly in this present age due to the fraudulent nature of some modern art "scenes." This nature I am referring to is related to fashion over feeling, and form over content.

The sight of the ocean, or even the feel of sunshine, are aesthetic experiences of beauty. One of the highest beauties available to man is that of the virtuous act, so rare and real that it can be breathtaking when we come in contact with it—if it bypasses the hazardous cerebral mechanism which blocks such pleasure, such fulfillment of our will from us. This is what I mean by, we must prepare ourselves for it. Some will not be able to understand the beauty of the Virtue artist. Some will be too callous, or too guilt-ridden, to accept it.

The definition of what I consider virtuous I do not consider arbitrary, although if we look at it as such it may be easier to communicate the vision of the doctrine. Each Virtue artist or writer must come up with his own themes of what he thinks will increase the interest in virtue for the viewer. The theory of Virtue art does not lend itself to criticism, since there are no set definitions put forward in this manifesto of what I think is virtuous. It doesn't matter to the individual what I think it is; it wouldn't mean as much second-hand anyway. Therefore anyone criticizing the Virtue theory is criticizing his own personal ethics, and is stating that art should have no ethical statement.

We have all felt the beauty of human virtue, and we all know that there are reasons for humans to be virtuous, both for their own benefit and that of others. We are undeniably in the position where we must act wisely, for we have no choice; we are here on the Earth, and logic is some sort of universal constant. If there is more to our intelligence and existence, if there is another level upward of social interactions between beings, it will be undeniably less stained by crime, slander, and malice than the world we know is.

A primary mode of working for the Virtue artist is to create art about the good and bad in humans, however in no way is this Virtue aesthetic limited to moral commentary. Virtue is a philosophical system akin to pragmatism; therefore its subject matter is immense, and there have been Virtue artists in the past. This document is a discovery, or a coining of a descriptive term, as much as it is a manifesto.

Virtue art in the mode of human morality is to create art about the man who sold you the used car which he said was in great condition but broke down a week after you bought it. It is about the woman who volunteers her time to help the elderly. It is about the ones who are seen as losers by the merciless society of fashion fascism, yet ones who may indeed live a deeper existence. It is about the person who can rise above the slander, malice, despair, callousness, and various other corruptions which infringe upon the higher form of the human spirit. It is about the faults of the intelligensia, of the hatreds of some of the artistic class, who complain about the "sleeping masses."

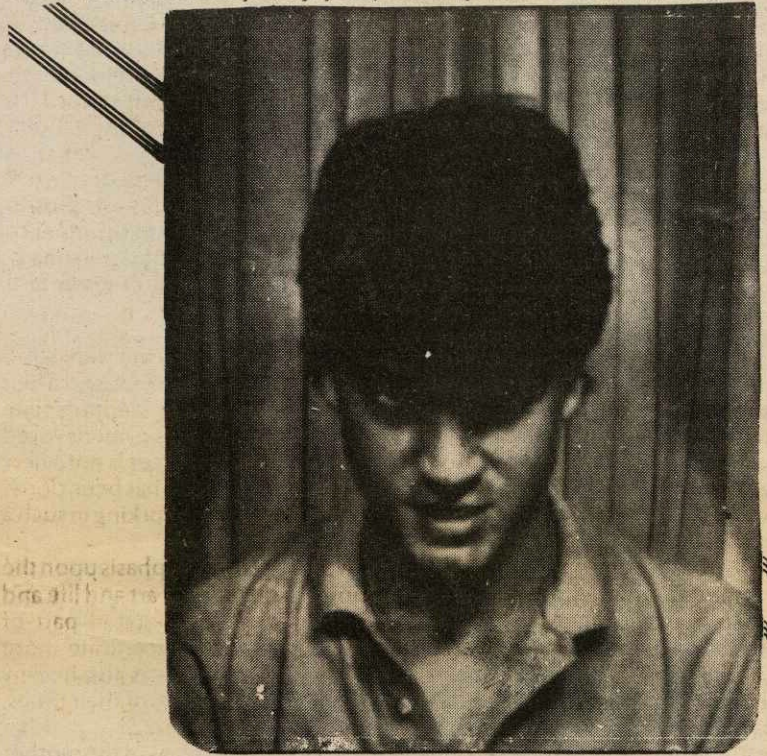
There is also good and bad in the realm of the creative, in as far as there are some, like Max Ernst, whose entire artistic life was constant experiment, invention, and revelation; and then there are others, too numerous to mention individually, whose art seems like a pose. It may be a pleasant formula which the artist has found, but upon investigation we see that ten variations of this theme is all they will express. What is wrong with this? While it is fine for some artists and some viewers, my point is that when one begins to study or simply to think about philosophy, aesthetics, politics, and the sciences, one will have much to say in one's art. Therefore the conclusion that I reach is that among the thousands of new artists who have cropped up in the past twenty years, among our current generation of modern artists, there are currently few of the philosopher/chemist/artist/scientist mode of a Max Ernst or an Arthur Rimbaud.

Virtue will require a movement of artists who are extreme individualists, due to the amoral nature of our current times. It will have to be voices capable of presenting these

ideas: virtue is beautiful and has the right to be considered a component of some art, just as form, texture, and color are components of painting. It will most likely be some of the younger artists who will subscribe to this doctrine, who have not cliqued into a school; those who are considered naive, those who have not seen the darkness and vanity of having "seen it all" and "exhausted it all." Whether these voices will come from the next generation of artists or from even further in the future has of course yet to be seen.

The entire crux of the Virtue movement is that there are creative people who agree that virtue and philosophical optimism are too important to stay in the background of art, or even of life. The defense is needed desperately today, when it seems that there is little concern for virtue, except in a perfunctory way. It has become too easy to become dulled to the battle of righteous indignation. To do so is the norm, it seems; and even if one is not dulled the methods of 'fighting' are all too stereotypical and stale and dangerous and ultimately worthless.

The main polemic against the Virtue aesthetic, or even against the idea of virtue itself, is the idea that there is no good or bad at all. On the cosmic level I will not bring in the argument for duality, but on a level of human interaction it is a perversion to interpret any major monastic doctrine as amoral. No major school of thought would ever state that there is no right and wrong in human interaction. This includes Nietzsche (and most of existentialism), Hinduism, Taoism, and Buddhism—the schools of thought which men of ignorance usually cite as "amoral." To be truly amoral is to be a loser in the cosmic battle: it is to become one with the evil in the world. To be amoral is not to defend the beauty, the strength, the joy to be found in the world which we have all experienced at one time or another. If we fall into the common intellectual mode of despair it does not mean that the world has become any less joyous; it is only we who have changed.



photos these pages/Robert S Pearson

Virtue art utilizes the didactic element in its creation. By some inventive act of the artist, his viewer is brought into a fairly objective view of a commonly accepted virtue such as creativity, honesty, compassion, discipline, or health. One must understand the fact of his own existence and the extent of the influence of his peers. This is where the ugliness of forced habit comes into play. We may desire to actually make the search for a higher philosophical truth our only goal, yet it is obvious that we shall have pitfalls ahead of us because we are tuned into our own culture, epoch, and class. Many say that we have little freedom to do anything. The worst offenders are often the ones with the biggest pretensions of being "modern," and thus the ones who believe that they are doing everything properly.

Another philosophical structure which Virtue enlists is the idea that it is likely that the ultimate truth is here among us, and in a rather explicit form. If it is not, this means that the Earth was set up in a way which doesn't care about our queries upon the noumenal. This is a sharp dividing line: Were the Earth and the universe established in a fashion which is benevolent (eternal life, initiation into absolute truths) to man, or in one which sees people as negligible?

The question will arise, "What about the naturalism, the portrayal of things as they really are?" It becomes obvious that the way people think they are, and how they perceive the world to be, is the way it really is for them alone. Realism is at best subjective. Let's look at the Kierkegaardian concept of possibility: Kierkegaard was clearly right when he said for man the truth is subjective. Schopenhauer said that the only logical worldview is a pessimistic one, in life after death. Anything he says can only pertain to himself, because another person's honest confession upon his deathbed of living an enjoyable life denies an omnipresent, objective pessimism. Thus a world view of optimism is equally valid.

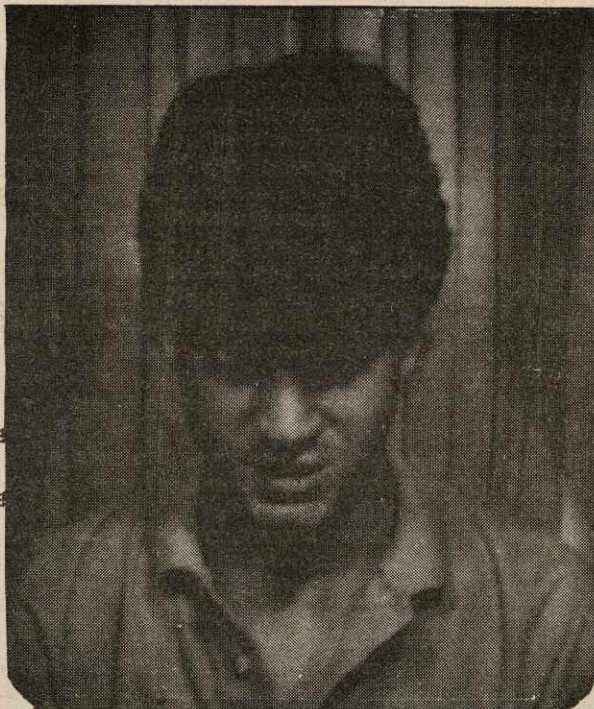
Therefore, the arts need not have to progress into Surrealism because it must escape an ugly world. The world indeed has arms enough of its own to interfere with our lives; yet the ultimate control of the world around us is ourselves, and the world has a different shape for each face which looks into it. At least this is the way it is naturally, but due to entropy mankind would rather look at the world in a packaged way, in order to avoid a life of controversy and battle.

The need for optimism in art and life is a real one. We are here existing on the planet, we must spend our lives in the attitude which we ourselves decide to be true. If we ruin our souls because of the trends of despair and misguided angst, what is to be said of our intellectism? This aesthetic theory states that it is paramount to become conscious of the fact that we only have one soul which is easily polluted and made useless for seeing beauty, and the marvels of a genetic awe. The art we create or look at controls us as we make or view it; it is a symbiotic process.

One easy way to look at artistic progression is that we must exclude the 'easy' art—the art which is so easy to produce. Art must become complex again. What I see happening as the new blood comes into the ranks of artists is that no one will be ready to do any 'about-faces.' To be crude, the saying goes "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." For art to be invigorating to the more philosophical and ethical among us, I propose these three steps: 1. We must realize what has already been exhausted by all previous artists, this forcing us to understand the broad nature of the selection available muses, and then to attempt to pick up one who is virgin.

2. We must become aware of our individuality as a soul, one who must make all of the decisions. I would recommend reading Kierkegaard, or a good book about his philosophy. Kierkegaard constantly leaves the doors of chance open. We must be aware of the possibility of optimism and make hope as effortless and realistic as possible.

Whenever complacency, competition, and egos arrive in the arts, there will be a reshuffling of the patterns of art.



Perhaps we are eternal souls who can be saved —there is no way to deny this possibility. An eternity of increasing joy is just as probable as the complete death of consciousness — the answer is only given by faith. Thus the inclusion of the spiritual or ethical and (to borrow a term from Rimbaud) healthy amounts of "infinite optimism" must be included in our art.

3. We must once again pick up the burdens of discipline. To slave over a piece of artwork seems rare in this day of 'inspiration' (One must be inspired, in a life of chosen desperation, to produce anything). Without discipline our art will remain in the ether or on our lips, but will never get into our work itself. What a pity this would be. I personally believe that Virtue art is the most difficult kind to produce, the most difficult aesthetic doctrine to follow.

Another technique for the increase in aesthetic form and content is the hybridization of existing forms. A rudimentary example of this would be to have a soundtrack for a film combines with a machine which emits vapors into the air of the theater at appropriate times, and then have temperature changes and wind machines, perhaps even flavored liquids to taste at specific moments. The notion of total sensory experiences is not a new idea, but one which has been with us for at least a hundred years, yet little has been done. But our lives are a constant experience in different sensory media; thus working in such a mode would virtually recreate life itself.

Some may see Virtue art as not offering anything 'new,' but it is the emphasis upon the obvious which is new about it. Virtue takes all of the positive qualities of art and life and reinstates their obvious worth. All such qualities were an implicitly-stated part of Surrealism, but when we do not mask this behind a title, we can concentrate more effectively upon what we are after. Obviously I realize that Surrealism was also heavily concerned with psychic-automatism and Freud and, due to the 'naivete' of their times, indulged in scandal in a different way than Virtue artists would have to.

Most great aesthetic movements aim originally to 'unthink' the dogmas of the mother culture. Most people go about anti-brainwashing in very crude ways which commonly become nothing more than sensationalism and reactionism. These two forms of setting oneself free are nothing more than losing to one's true intellectual capacity and—worse yet—losing to the culture you set out to defeat by freeing yourself from its habitual hold. We can judge these people by their fruits, which are usually meant to be defense mechanisms to make up for the little they have to offer.

Hopefully most of us remember a time in childhood when the world was innocent before us. Virtue is not something forced upon us by culture, as what the word morality has come to mean. Virtue is innocence, unpretention, friendship, trust. We have all felt this love. Thus when we act upon a virtuous ground, we only reinforce what is really needed. Virtue is the survival of the intellectual fittest; its denial our being in control by the animal qualities of our human nature.

Thus the concept of Virtue is a major component of our lives, and is applicable to many academic pursuits. One of these is psychology, in which virtue can shed light upon many subdivisions. We can understand some of the mentally ill as people who are in a constant battle with their need to be virtuous individuals, but who are not given opportunity or understanding from their fellow human beings. People do not want to make other people feel better; this fact must be accepted and integrated into our academics wherever possible. Also, some people get a sickening shot of energy, or an ego-feed, when they have made someone feel bad. People do and have always liked to intimidate others. This intimidation is the cause of much mental illness. Therefore we should not only look to the victim to blame for his/her condition, but to the environment/community. This is not a new idea either, and it has been applied, but obviously not enough.

The main problem which some of us see in the realm of modern art is the fact that much of the work of the 1970's and 1980's is created by people who are familiar with the abstract styles, and perceive the duplication of them as an end in itself. They know what to look for in a work by Jasper Johns or Paul Klee. They know why their paintings are considered "great art," and try to mimic their styles. However their art is no longer the statement that the art which inspired theirs is. To merely paint in a style, to be concerned merely with form, is a kind of creative work that can barely be called art; or perhaps it should be called art and we should invent a new word for what impresses us.

As is stated in electronic music by Milton Babbitt, nothing grows old faster than a new sound. Perhaps the same is true in painting: It is not primarily form, texture, and line which make a visual art work great, but its wit and intelligence. This is how the arts are interlinked; how Surrealism could work well in literature as well as in painting. There is presently no link between the statements of much of today's art and counterparts in literature. Neither is it the purpose of this manifesto to link them. But when I refer to painting, my statements can refer to other media as well.

For hundreds of years the cry of the artists and philosophers has been that the masses are asleep and must wake up. Each generation seems to believe that it is the first to understand this, and to a minor extent many people believe they are the first to understand this. In reality the call has been going on probably since ancient Egypt, and in city areas before Egypt. Whenever complacency arrives, whenever there is competition in the arts, wherever there are egos being praised and egos wanting to be praised, there

will be a reshuffling of the patterns of art. What makes Virtue art different is that it has strong philosophical foundations upon which it is built. The structure of the Virtue aesthetic is in time-proven insight and wisdom. It is in the eyes of men who have realized that they are a soul first of all (verily, a realization which many will never come to, or be able to take seriously).

There are several reasons why I formulated or synthesized this aesthetic doctrine. For many, nothing is new anymore, and this is a reason why this text came into existence. There was the thought, "What today could be as shocking as Dada was in its day, yet without resorting to cheap shock tactics such as sexual perversion, violence, decadence, etcetera?" The only answer that came into my mind was, "PURITY WOULD BE SHOCKING" (The initial repulsion to the title "Virtue" for a modern aesthetic movement was likewise calculated.). For us to see a human being who actually loves his neighbor "as himself" would be an aesthetic experience of a high caliber.

In writing a text called a "manifesto" the author of course realizes the definite colorings of the word. I was faced with the decision whether to use it or not, and for a time I wasn't going to use it. Yet I felt that what I had to say was new and important enough for such a strong title. I am proud to say that this is a philosophical treatise with artistic and literary overtones, not a political call-to-arms in the name of virtue. Politics uses force and restriction to control people, whereas Virtue believes in the freedom of all non-violent people.

Creativity is a virtue. Virtue is an aesthetic experience. Virtue is the ultimate in non-violent protest. Virtue is the ultimate in pragmatism. What do we protest against the masses for if we do the same things as they? Separation from the masses must be done in ethics also.

Like every other movement we will gain grounds of opinion and attitude. At stake is a world at home in impossibility and despair: we must open the doors of possibility and pleasure. At stake is a world of ignorance and vices: what we can offer is philosophy and effortless purity. In the grounds of opinion and attitude our doctrine gains, we will plant trees from preferable scenes of small pleasures encouraging a cooperative of idealism, hope, and help. There will be no need to fear a "big brother" approach to altruism. This is our pet-peeve, since we have seen the horrifying failures of ALL man's previous attempts at this. *Utopia is impossible*. All that can be done is to realize that every person is his own army for the increase of virtue, yet no man is an island. Networking and correspondance are encouraged however. I myself am very open to it.

—Robert S. Pearson

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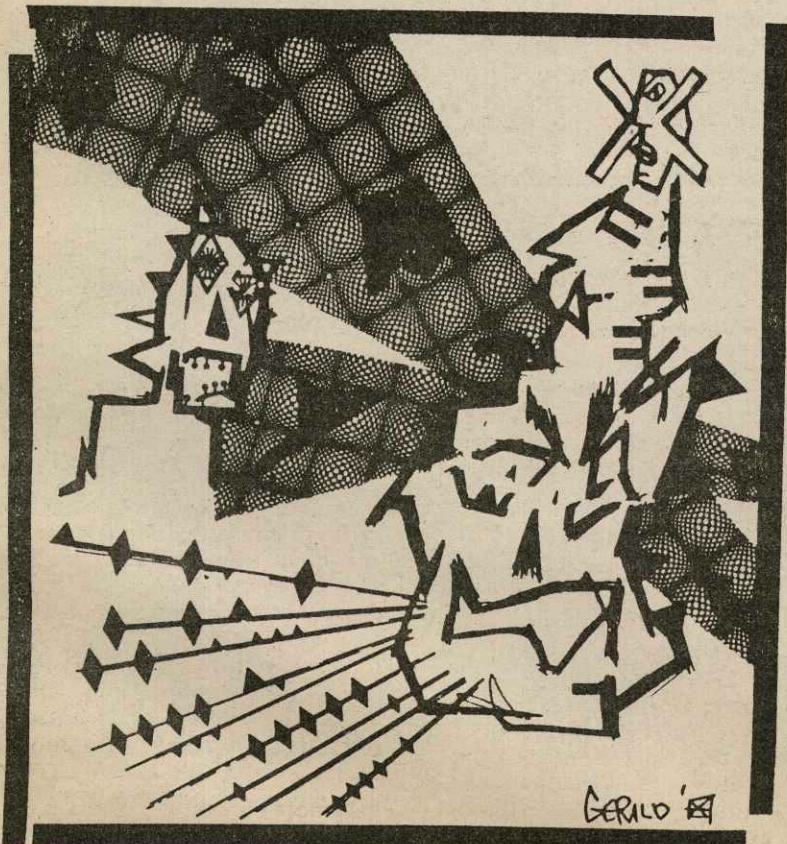
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VANCOUVER, CANADA
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design art/GX Jupiter-Larsen

This essay, to be considered if you will as a metaphor for the American independent-art community, was contributed by Hater **Gerald X. Jupiter-Larsen** as a personal reaction to A/a #8's discussion of Audio Leter "and the sociology of the music underground."

We live in a world in which the idea of Anarchy is as inappropriate as that of government: and the following essay on sociology is an interpretation thereof.

□□□□

Only moments ago a few people made a planet inside a test tube. Using a geophysical fluid flow cell, they stimulated an atmosphere over a small sphere. Heaters were used to provide equator-to-pole changes. The cell rotated up to once every thirty seconds because of the atmospheric circulation. Thinking about a planet inside a test tube always makes me ponder about the concept of context.

The concept of context is a very fragile one. The interrelated conditions in which something occurs can have far less influence with what it surrounds, than what it surrounds has on it.

In the act of taking something out of context, it is not as important for something to be surrounded by a context, as it is for a context to receive something to exhibit. This is true regardless if the contexts and contents involved are objects, environments, or physical, mental, or a combination thereof.

What titillates my interest in all of this is the idea of the act of taking context out of context. One would take context out of context by removing the essence of the connotation of an entity without any physical modification to that said substance. This is done by a re-evaluation of all other parallel contexts.

Absolutely everything everywhere is a meaningless, impious circumstance. However this compilation of biological accidents, which makes up reality, does affect the shape of its own occurrence. It does not however affect the conceptual relationships which one imposes on entities. This is totally subjective on the part of the individuals involved. It is this subjective activity however which makes the act of taking context out of context possible. This is because the context of any occurrence is far more subjective than the contents.

This is because there are far more intellectual components which will make up a context than any content of a context. With more components there will always be more personal judgements stamped upon the total conceptual structure in question.

Reality is everything which isn't an artificial representation of a subjective mechanics; but to effectively take context out of context, one has to take into account how one is influenced by ones own personal interests and emotions. What this means is not that there is more than one reality, but that reality is multidimensional.

When one takes context out of context one does not affect reality at all. What one does is to change ones own perception of the circumstance involved. For any person who normally recognizes standard connotations, this modification of perception is what happens when that person simultaneously uses a hammer as a doorstop, and doesn't perceive the hammer as being a hammer being used as a doorstop, but perceives it as being merely a doorstop. This same kind of perception modification is what happens if that same someone simultaneously uses liters to measure length, and doesn't perceive there being any kind of a juxtaposition taking place. It is also this same act of taking context out of context which actually transpires when that same somebody simultaneously perceives the color black as being a smell, and doesn't sense synesthesia happening.

It should be noted that if somebody had always perceived the color black as being a smell, then it would only be a modification of perception if, at one point, this somebody perceived the smell of black as being a color.

Likewise, for any person who normally doesn't recognize anything as having a standard connotation, then the act of taking context out of context would only happen if, at one point, that person did.

During the actual transaction itself, the act of taking context out of context is indiscernable. If it weren't, one would only be combining context within context. One isn't aware of it until after it has happened. So if someone used a drinking glass as a paperweight and perceived it not as a drinking glass but as a paperweight, then that person wouldn't be aware of this intellectual event until after he began to perceive the phenomenon as *being* a phenomenon. Otherwise, nothing would have taken place to warrant any attention by this or any other person. To study this mind performance, one is always forced to review.

To study this kind of a perception modification is to stimulate a reappraisal of logic; no matter which forms of logic you may be employing. The over-emphasis on logic tends to encourage some to fasten reason upon irrational occurrences like reality. This is a mistake. There isn't anything rational about an accident-of-events like reality. There also isn't anything negative about any of this. Things are the way they are because that's the way in which they all fell together.

The questionable part to all of this is how one intellectualizes whatever it is which is going on around him.

Reviewing the act of taking context out of context will tend to stimulate some to think in terms of a simultaneous engagement in many different forms of logic, nonlogic, and combined logic/nonlogic. It is this approach to a thought process which will help one to see through the mistake of giving reality reason.

Reality being the very nature of irrationality itself.

—Gerald X. Jupiter-Larsen

(PO Box 48184 Vancouver CANADA V7X 1N8)

What sort of man reads...



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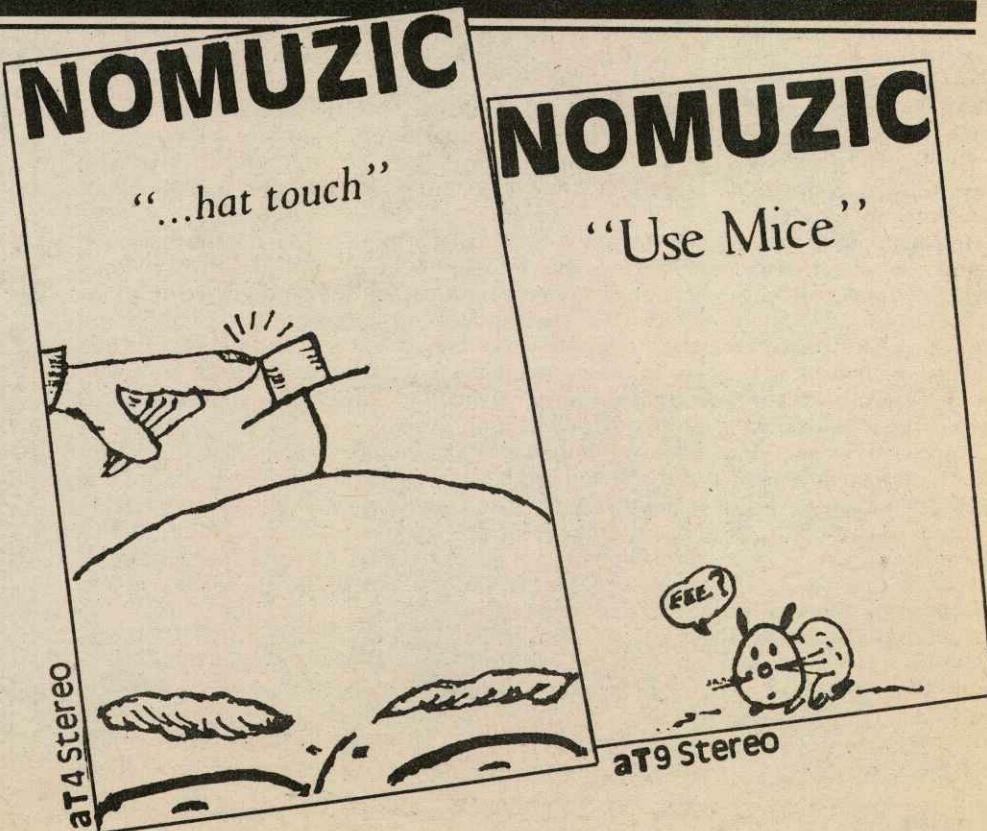
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—Continued from page 8

singly comprehensive (in its scope and treatment of individual parts) as the Schillinger system. Such agreement can only be gained when examining his works (a general view can be obtained in the biography of his life by his wife Fances).

Throughout the progression of musical history (and other arts as well), we note two main forces at work: the Apollonian (the thinker, the rationalist who would follow the dictates of reason) and the Dionysian (who is impassioned and subject to emotional outbursts; thoroughly romantic). In the "classical" period we note a focus upon precision, balance—with its precursor being the Baroque era. Later, in the Romantic era we notice an imbalance; a shift to purely emotional expressiveness (beginning perhaps with Beethoven). The twentieth century has observed a return to balance, though this return is one of greater musical resources.

With Arnold Schoenberg, we find the birth of Dodecaphony: the application of method to produce a tone row—in some cases the non-repetition of any one note until all of the members of the chromatic scale are sounded. This technique thwarts the idea of KEY/tonality. It is actually expanded tonality, and not "atonal" at all, as would-be academicians would have us believe. "Atonal" suggests "without tones," but clearly tones are used. Schoenberg, for his part, suggested the term "anti-tonal."

The later achievements of students of Schoenberg (Anton Webern, Alban Berg) witness an application of this non-repetition of not only notes, but also rhythms and

timbres. This leads into a formalization of music which makes its presence felt in the 1950's (some using electronic media) with the compositions of Edgar Varese, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Iannis Xenakis (who is not only a composer but, originally, an architect by trade). Among the architectural contributions of Xenakis, one can count the famous Philips Pavilion of the 1958 Brussels Worlds Fair, in which the monumental "Poeme Electronique" of Varese was premiered.

Xenakis' music reveals this same attention to structuring, as he relies upon mathematical equations and other formalized techniques when he composes. This is the essence of "Stochastic Music."

Today, with an increased awareness of music as substance, we note endeavors in all directions of musical concern. Whether this is aesthetically pleasing to the listener is an interesting question, for we must realize that the musical "ears" of any time in man's evolution have often been slow-paced in comparison with the visionary minds of the time. Goethe, upon hearing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, said "I have never heard such bombast in my life." This is an indication of how we must proceed with caution when we listen to the new musics. We needn't listen with century-old ears [or think with even older minds]; what we need is INQUIRY. Schoenberg foresaw the "emancipation of the dissonance," but today, much of this dissonance has become consonance. These relative terms need a bit of re-thinking. The Apollonian thinker is among us.

—Glen Flax

"AN OPEN LETTER"

Another Problematic Matter / Correspondence between A/a and Sordide Sentimentale

Rouen le 14/8/85

Dear Carl,

William Davenport just sent to me a xerocopy of the review you did for the Problemist LP [9 Times Sanity, in A/a #5 April 1985]. Although there are many criticisms (mixed with some compliments) I really think this is one of the best reviews published about one of my productions.

Of course I completely disagree with you about what you wrote about my own work for this LP, and I hope that you will accept my remarks as well as I accept yours...

First I give you the list of the records I published in the past where the name of the band was never mentioned: BILLY SYNTH, BIZARROS, DURUTTI COLUMN, MONTE CAZZAZA, LUDUS, and the two issues of *Isolation Intellectuelle*. Total—Seven x Problemist LP.

And now the list of the records in which the name is mentioned: THROBBING GRISTLE, JOY DIVISION, TUXEDOMOON, SAVAGE REPUBLIC, PSYCHIC TV. Total—Five.

So you see, the fact that the name of Problemist is not mentioned is not an exception. On the contrary, it's one of the distinctive aspects of SS. The systematic use of the enigma is very important to me. With this sort of text the reader is obliged to question himself, to make an effort; and finally, to think by himself (most people are lazy!).

Obviously something is missing between my text and the music of Problemist; it would also be untrue to say that my text is completely esoteric: I give some keys.

And curiously, in your review, you completely forget to mention the second part of my text (this part about the sounds) which give people the direction to explore. To explain to you the nature of this "missing link" between the text and the music of Problemist would be an insult to your intelligence. Read it again and listen to their music at the same time—and you will find it of course.

For one moment forget the conscious message, and listen to the unconscious one. Notice the very specific texture of their music. In any art production we find at least two levels: the conscious message and the symbolist one. I am far more interested in the second one. This is what most people don't admit!

You think that I am paranoid; it's true, but I have some reasons to be like that: all our productions have been attacked. One example, the most famous one: the text I did for the Joy Division single. The English rock critics published some ironic comments about my text (Rob Gretton, their manager, did the same in an interview): I was crazy because I was speaking about their German Romanticism. For them it was obvious that Joy Division was a "modern band" and nothing else. The things changed suddenly when Ian Curtis committed suicide.

If there is one thing sure it's that JD was not romantic because Ian died, but on the contrary, that he died because *he himself* (and consequently the music of JD) was romantic—and it's obvious that New Order is nothing.

About the warning for the Problemist LP ["The Fundamental Illegitimacies of Claims of Textual Obscurantism"], I have one thing to explain: when in June 1984 (the 1st) I organized the Psychic TV concert in Rouen, I was obliged to write an article for the local press, and consequently obliged to write it in a journalistic style (that is to say: only common and obvious information). All the people I met after the publication of this text told me it was a fantastic [essay]. "Please, continue to write like that," they said. "It's very clear, I understand everything!" Could you imagine the effect upon me of this sort of 'compliment'? They disturbed me. It's true that there is humor in this warning; but bitter humor.

There are two reasons why I am publishing my texts with records: the first is that the music is really the center of my life, and the second is that, if edited in a book, my readers would have been only persons already convinced by my ideas (which is without any effect). I am obsessed by the fact that if you want to awaken people you must speak to those who are sleeping.

In my opinion the rock audience and the record collectors are sleeping. But I don't want only to develop their consciousness; my second slogan is also REAM—because it's the second side of reality, and it's something creative (it can be so!).

Sincerely,
Jean-Pierre Turmel
SORDIDE SENTIMENTALE
BP 534
76005 ROUEN CEDEX
FRANCE

An open letter to Jean-Pierre Turmel from the ARTITUDE Valley:

After a period of about two years in which I unsuccessfully attempted contact, I was both surprised and, why not, honored to receive communication from you regarding my long review of Problemist's 9 Times Sanity. Your letter was exactly of the order I appreciate most—literate, intelligent, and stimulating of debate. By honestly revealing your intentions about the construction of "Problematic Matter," I was encouraged to re-research my own materials to discern whether my original criticisms were confused, or simply in error. I discovered that although I had not merely imagined your paranoia, I had been unnecessarily harsh about the extent—the parameters—of it. Certain of my facts were incorrect, such as the contention that the essay was the only one of yours not to mention a band; and my omission of the section relating to sound and symbolism was indeed glaring and unfortunate. You were however quite fair to me given the circumstances, and your willingness to explain, above mere answering, exposes the press' ignorance of your stance, in all of its ridiculous elitism and jealous arrogance. Without the "benefit" of the British weekly rock press in this country to herd our responses—our likes and dislikes—into locked pipens, we cannot understand the

tense atmosphere which serves to induce/increase your paranoia.

It is essential that you claim "the systematic use of the enigma," and that you "give some keys" towards the intellectual and aesthetic goal. In picking up this thread I shall now attempt to illuminate my own departure point—and therefore that of A/a—from the standard approach of rock journalism. Why do I attempt to isolate aspects of form in a genre whose rhetoric has been so rigidly limited?

In confronting the work of artists through the publication of articles more systematically analytical than judgemental ("art" versus "entertainment"); in singling out the achievements of a Problemist [whose newest cassette, *After Sanity*, is available from Cause & Effect Distribution—address in A/a #9], a Psychic TV, an Audio Leter, a Viscera, an F/i, a John Zorn, even an SPK; the attempt is to situate within the embers of a dying culture those who recognize the influence—upon the living body and the searching mind—of effects and processes sometimes beyond our control or understanding. The not-yet or all-too-well-known are frequently the most blinded areas of not only our perceptions but our ABILITY and DESIRE TO PERCEIVE. Yes, we are as dumb as we think we are, and probably moreso. I discuss music presumably because like yourself I feel music and, to some extent, live it. It is a virus which I willingly nurture. Using music as a catalyst of perception I can literally gain more energy to direct my thoughts—the will to think, so to speak.

However what I see around me are artists and participants in a so-called "underground" who are not supportive of a mentally creative atmosphere, who instead allow their own prerogatives to be dominated by those in and of the mainstream. The logic and rhetoric of the consumer-minded Music Industry (one of this country's true AntiChrists) are applied unsuccessfully to the supposedly "independent" world of cassettes and performances; and yet awareness of this obviously unsuitable situation does not increase. Read the capsule-review section of any "indie" sheet—you will see snobbish, underinformed, and exceedingly judgemental depictions of each product; and without any great insight into the creative process, each artist is rated according to whom he SOUNDS LIKE. Their work is rated favorably or unfavorably, depending on whether or not the REVIEWER HIMSELF enjoys the style. And so a cassette by an artist who works in many forms is deliberately slanted and slighted into the narrowest depiction.

Presumably the reviewers believe that we only read reviews to see what we should buy, and not to get any brief ideas of the kind (not simply genre) of work being done; but is it really the reviewer's "job" to encourage vapid consumerism while fostering ignorance of the creative processes? Thus we insult ourselves down to the level of the lowest, high-school newspaper rock review: "It's great. It's the coolest. Whip out that wallet."

Our "underground" becomes degraded, vampirized, by becoming no better or worse than the mentality of teen rock fanzines (in which Big Men tell little kids how to spend their allowance pennies). Then we wonder why our work is not more recognized! Why should it be, in such a state? We refuse to fight for the very independence we proclaim so loudly with our work, which supposedly sounds "different," presumably from the fare on commercial radio at any given hour. Yet if we cannot define precisely what we stand for, our work in an "alternative" mode will stand for nothing. Alternative to what, exactly? Independent of what?

As rational beings, we understand that we will feel no uplift, no "enlightenment," from that which insults our intelligence. Are we pompous because we are turned off by vapid entertainments devoid of any true imagination or spirit? However we must be willing to examine ourselves as severely, as harshly, as we do others. This is the beginning of true realization. We cannot fester and must not homogenize. Today radical exponents of culture (and not "exponents of radical culture") must prepare for internal war—the threat is completely from within—and be willing to sacrifice our more consumeristic affinities when we approach our work/aesthetic. In our society we are trained to get without working for it, to have without asking, and to enjoy without suffering. This is the death of all active life—the ultimate extinction of the will to survive. The beginnings of perception involve merely seeing smaller areas on a grander scale.

This is where our duty as "outsiders" must lie. It is those who fight without purpose who do so foolishly, and forever alone.

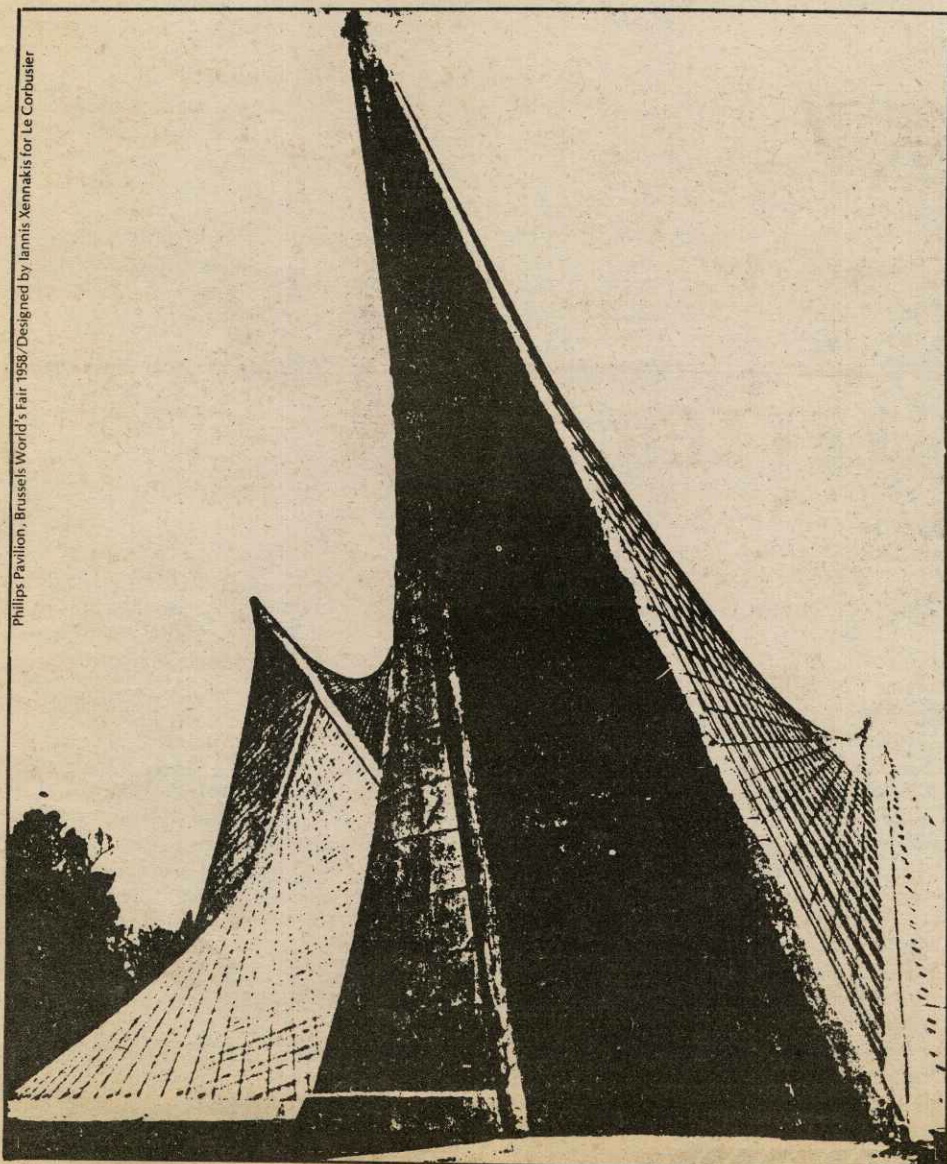
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"THE LOGICAL METHOD IN MUSIC"



A Co-Relation of the Arts

Aesthetic Insights of Schillinger

The theoretical contributions of Joseph Schillinger (1895-1943) have engineered a quiet upheaval in the realm of artistic pursuit, beginning with his enlightening masterwork *The Mathematical Basis of the Arts* (1942). Although he is better known for his work *The Schillinger System of Musical Composition*, both works—through mass neglect—have retained somewhat of the status of underground bibles. Primarily the works remain known only to those who would subject themselves to an honest inquiry pertaining to the rational nature and value of Schillinger's approach.

The goal of this article is to serve as an enticer in eliciting this honest inquiry, which would examine all forms of acquired knowledge; to try to attain both general and underlying principles of art media. Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary "defines" art as follows: "An aesthetically pleasing and meaningful arrangement of elements; as words, sounds, colors, shapes, etcetera." This description is straightforward and helpful [if biased] in its 'matter-of-fact' precision.

But what is Schillinger's approach, his method? First, a moment of background. Schillinger was a person who wore many hats with exceeding excellence. He was a mathematician, a musical theorist, and a composer of musical and spatial art works. He had what some people call, through their own lack of understanding, a "Positivist" attitude; he believed that all forms of art could be rationally intuited through the use of logical methods. In *The Mathematical Basis of the Arts*, Schillinger sets down axioms which are inherent in the raw materials themselves. From this we can construct and analyze other art products.

Schillinger then goes into a historical study of the development of the arts. Using our five senses as the basis for a potential art form, we notice an early prediction of the fusion of the arts. Although the plastic arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.) serve as stimulus to our brain VIA the eyes, music finds its pathway through the ears—and ballet is a crude fusion of both stimuli. Over the past twenty years or so we have observed attempts at a "total art work"—one which plays upon all of the senses. The 1975 film *Earthquake* in "Sensurround" was a good example: our senses of sight, hearing, and touch being simultaneously excited. This "master-structure" of all possible art forms is clearly represented in Schillinger's "M.B. Arts" (pages 59-60).

We have just employed the method of permutation and precise combination of all the sensual elements. For example if we have two colors, or two notes, or two masses of sculpting material, we could represent them in abstract form as *Elements A, B*. We can arrange these components in two and only two ways: A, B or B, A. Three elements allow for 3x2x1, or six permutations. Four elements allow for twenty four permutations, and so on. We have just arrived at an axiom: *permutation*, which later yields "laws of identity."

Man's first attempts at creating "art" were primitive cave paintings, as man sought to reproduce what he saw and experienced. But let us look at the subject: reality. Nature itself, from the atom to the entire universe, is a mass of elements in proportion—and the elements which we perceive when grouped together to form a snowflake are of exacting symmetry; these conform not to any man-made laws, but to the laws by which they are made. They have *mathematic logic*—and we as rational animals may extract this logic by observing it in operation, and then by watching mankind's responses to the exterior world.

Schillinger asserts that "human thought itself may be geometrical projections." But great ideas overlap. Precise human inquiry into the realm of philosophy also hints at this. Nature is seen to be the creator of the greatest art works; and the most divine symphonies spring from the canonic imitation inherent in the echo of our valleys. Man, in his infinite ego, just takes notes and draws conclusions, often on a confused idea. This may seem a little out-in-left-field in the ball game of art; but an explanation of the "M.B. Arts" also goes into an examination of great art works and ponders why they are great. Mathematical series are observed, such as the Fibonacci Series, which comes from a "structure and function" relationship in nature.

Periodicity-Rhythm is the fundamental element in all composition; but in a grander sense the universe itself is built out of rhythmic factors—the motions of gaseous bodies, the interference of wave motions. This idea is developed in the section "Theory of Regularity and Coordination." With Schillinger we find a culmination of many great past

artistic contributions, but the author is concerned with the engineering of art; with the rational production of art. Here we begin a serious examination of aesthetics. Why do we have art? It satisfies a human need, that of expression. Art is herein viewed as an evolutionary process which we will one day outgrow, because the need for the medium will no longer be present.

This idea is at once the next step in man's evolution; but to many people (myself included), the present state of art is emotionally riveting. Logic, however, prevails. Our purpose at the moment is to observe what Schillinger wrote, how he thought, and what his method—his basis—consists of. Only by serious examination and the desire for truth do we gain such an aesthetic insight. It would take a much grander investigation to do any kind of justice to such a work as *The Mathematical Basis of the Arts*; but again the goal as stated at the beginning of this article was to be that of a mental *hors d'oeuvre*.

The union of music and logical method has never really been a happy one to many academicians, although throughout history we find such composers as Beethoven and Paul Hindemith making offhand remarks like "See how closely related are number and beauty, mathematics and art." If we are to ever gain any deep understanding of music and music history, we *must* subject it to the same exactitudes which give us precision in structural engineering or physics-rational methods. A substantial body of musicians and professors—the majority, so it would seem—would happily remain in their trance-like states about music; sadly, they have not the ability (or they simply refuse) to ABSTRACT AN IDEA IN ORDER TO SEE ITS FUNDAMENTAL PARTS. They are concerned with matters of an opposite nature. A quick look at teaching handbooks reveals a deep concern with the world of the particular (given such typical conservatory courses as "The Concerto," "The String Quartet in History and Performance," and "The Quartets of Beethoven"). While this may be a cute trick, such courses only teach what these composers *did*—NOT what choices they had open to them: indeed, how they chose to order the three *basic elements of music*: TONAL (pitch and pitch relations); TEMPORAL (rhythm and rhythmic relations); and TIMBRAL (the sound-producing machinery).

What we are trying to do is to gain a *logical* and unified view of music's components, and then to make an examination of instruments and instrumental practice. We will examine modern-day applications of logical techniques in Formalized or "Stochastic Music" along with its predecessors in time.

Rhythm/temporal activity is the most fundamental and basic component of music. We see that this is in evidence particularly in Jazz, or even in the native folk music of many respective cultures. Schillinger begins his *System of Musical Composition* and—sixteen hundred pages later—concludes with his "Theory of Composition" and "Theory of Orchestration." Moving in a Cartesian manner from the most simple to the most complex, we see a well-structured theory of musical composition (which can only be verified through application). By the end of Book One, "Theory of Rhythm," Schillinger maps out not only ALL possible rhythms, but he also remakes the haphazard notation system which is now in common practice the world over. Schillinger's early writings in the 1920's and '30's laid the ground work for the most recent compositional developments. Instead of utilizing the standard musical staff, Schillinger subjects musical organization to graphic expression, in which pitch, timbre, and rhythm are expressed *precisely* as the composer intended. There is no longer a dispute as to performance interpretation, because instead of relying upon such clearly obscure Italian commands as "vivace," "allegro," "forte," etc., Schillinger establishes unerring ideas based upon exact representations of dynamics and tempi.

On Page 1487 of his Composition text, Schillinger sets forth his "Scheme of Evolution of Musical Instruments," which is a dispassionate (but marvelous) view of the history of "the sound-producing hardware." It proceeds as follows:

From Prehistoric Time

1. Man utilizes his own organs: voice, palms, feet, lips, tongue, etc.

From Ten-Twenty Thousand Years Ago until our time

2. Man utilizes finished or near-finished objects of the surrounding world: bamboo pipes, shells, bones of birds, animal horns, antlers, etc.

From Five-Ten Thousand Years Ago until our time

3. Man processes raw materials, giving them definite form; from a piece of terra cotta and hunters-bow up to the Steinway piano and modern organ.

From Eighteenth Century AD

4. Man constructs automatically-performing instruments: from eighteenth century, mechanical performing instruments; from the nineteenth century, recording and reproducing musical instruments.

From the End of the Nineteenth Century

5. Man develops transmission of sound waves over long-distance radio.

From the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

6. Man devises sound production by means of:

A: Electro-magnetic induction

B: Interference in electro-magnetic field.

Music departments in universities would be very hard-pressed to produce such a succinct history of instrumental evolution; this is sad, but it is again evidence of NOT VIEWING THE ABSTRACT WHOLE. Referring to pages 133-136 of the composition text, Schillinger requires only a page or so to map out the entire harmonic basis of music for the past millennia. Such insights could only come from a wholly rational mind; it is this same mind which subjected Bach melodies to graphic expressions in order to note their symmetry; and again the same mind (which Albert Einstein recognized) that graphed skylines and then played them at the piano. Listeners said it sounded like the music of Felix Mendelssohn! Such is the application of METHOD. No other treatise on music is as

—Continued on page 7

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